

**National Law Enforcement Officers  
Memorial Fund**

**13<sup>th</sup> Annual Wreathlaying Ceremony**

**National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial  
Judiciary Square  
E Street, between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets, NW  
Washington, DC**



**Keynote Remarks by  
Charles H. Ramsey  
Chief of Police  
Metropolitan Police Department**

**October 15, 2004**

Good afternoon, and thank you. It is my distinct pleasure to say a few words at this ceremony ... a ceremony that I find both solemn and yet celebratory at the same time.

“Solemn” ... because once again we gather on these hallowed grounds to remember and mourn the loss of 11 more law enforcement officers. Like the thousands of officers before them, whose names are inscribed on these walls, these brave men died while serving and protecting others.

I know that all of us here today wish that this particular ceremony – indeed, this entire memorial – were somehow unnecessary. We wish that we would never have to gather here or anywhere else to remember a spouse, a parent, a child, a fellow police officer taken from us far too early. And yet we all recognize that policing in the United States is a unique job ... a job that brings great challenges, great rewards and, yes, great sacrifices – including the ultimate sacrifice made by these 11 heroes and by the 16,500 other heroes who are memorialized here.

So while none of us wishes that this ceremony and this memorial were necessary, I think all of us can take a great deal of pride, as well as some solace and comfort, in the fact that we do have a memorial – a beautiful and powerful memorial – to a group of beautiful and powerful individuals who touched so many lives, in so many positive ways.

And that’s where the celebratory aspect of today’s ceremony comes in. For as much as this memorial serves to honor and mourn the loss of our fallen officers, it is also a place for us to remember and to celebrate their lives, their dreams, their accomplishments, their service. And their lives certainly are worth remembering and celebrating today ... and every day of the year.

So it is fitting and proper that we have this Law Enforcement Officers Memorial – and very soon, a museum to accompany it. And it is also fitting and proper that on October 15<sup>th</sup> of each year, we come together to mark the anniversary of the memorial’s dedication in 1991. Our loved ones, our friends, our colleagues whose names fill these walls deserve nothing less than this inspiring and powerful symbol of our profession and all that it stands for. I am honored – and, frankly, humbled – to be a small part of today’s event.

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To me, it is very important not only that we have this memorial to our fallen officers, but also that this memorial is located right here in the heart of Washington, DC – our Nation’s Capital, a beacon of hope and freedom for the entire world.

Washington, DC, is often called a “city of monuments,” and one would be hard-pressed to argue with that. Our monuments and memorials are nationally and internationally recognized symbols of all that is great and good in our country: our ideals, our values, our history and, of course, the men

and women who created and have sustained this most unique endeavor in human freedom. And while this particular memorial may not be the most well-known or visited in our city, I think it serves as a strong and poignant complement to some of the more famous monuments and memorials in DC.

Think about it for just a moment.

DC has a monument to honor George Washington – the father of our country, the person who, over the course of history, has come to represent the Constitutional rights and freedoms that really define us as Americans, and which set our nation apart from so many other countries in the world. Who, more than our brave and dedicated law enforcement officers, work tirelessly – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – to protect and defend the very rights and freedoms that President Washington and the Washington Monument have come to symbolize?

DC has a memorial to honor Thomas Jefferson – the author of the Declaration of Independence, a champion of universal liberties and equality, and a staunch defender of the notion that government is there to serve the people ... not the other way around. Who, more than our brave and dedicated law enforcement officers, are there every day to defend liberty, promote equality, and serve the people in ways that few others would dare to even try?

DC has a memorial to honor Abraham Lincoln – the Great Emancipator, the leader who, in the face of civil war, stood firm in defending the principle that all men are created equal ... and in doing so, rejected hatred, bigotry and inequality. Who, more than our brave and dedicated law enforcement officers, are out on the front lines of that same struggle today – ensuring equal treatment under the law, battling crime and violence (including the scourge of hate crime), and promoting civil rights and justice for all?

And, of course, DC has memorials to our soldiers who fought and who sacrificed in far-off lands – Europe, Japan, Korea and Viet Nam – in order to safeguard our nation and our allies from tyranny and, in some cases, Holocaust. Who, more than our brave and dedicated law enforcement officers, are there today to wage that noble battle here at home – keeping our communities safe and secure in the face of enemies, both domestic and foreign?

Ladies and gentlemen ... in my mind, the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial is much more than a tribute to 16,500 individuals who have been killed in the line of duty. This memorial is a vital piece of the mosaic that is our Nation's Capital – a mosaic that captures and celebrates the spirit of our nation and the bedrock principles that make us so great and unique.

Throughout history, our country has been blessed with special and visionary leaders. We would not be where we are today – as a free and democratic society – without them. But let us never forget

that supporting and defending that grand vision of freedom and equality have been literally thousands and thousands and thousands of police officers over the years – men and women who had the courage and the conviction to stare down danger, and to go to work every day to make our communities a little bit safer and our democracy a whole lot stronger.

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They are men and women like the 11 fallen officers we remember today.

I did not have the privilege of knowing or working with all 11 of them, although I did enjoy that privilege with two: Sergeant John Ashley and Sergeant Clifton Rife of the Metropolitan Police Department. Both were outstanding public servants, in the great tradition of Thomas Jefferson. Not a day goes by that our Department and our community do not miss them. They were both special human beings, who – in their own unique ways – touched the lives of many and made our Department that much better.

Today brings back fresh memories of their lives, as well as newfound sorrow over the loss of their camaraderie. I know that the friends and relatives and colleagues of the other nine heroes are feeling many of the same emotions that members of my Department are feeling today.

But as sad and as painful as our individual losses may be, I do know that all of us can take both comfort and pride in one undeniable truth: these men did not die in vain. They were taken from us doing what they did best: serving and protecting and defending not only their individual communities, but also the ideals, the values and the freedoms that are so uniquely American.

They are forever a part of the noble tradition that is law enforcement in the United States of America. And they are forever a part of the fabric – strong and vast and resilient – that is the American dream ... a dream that was launched in the imaginations of our forefathers, and a dream that is sustained today by the hard work and bravery and sacrifice of our police officers.

These special men and women of law enforcement will never be forgotten, because this special place – this amazing memorial that has been here for the last 13 years – will endure for generations to come.

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Thank you very much for the opportunity to be a part of today's ceremony ... and, yes, today's celebration of all that this memorial stands for. May God bless and protect each and every one of us, and may He bless and protect our profession and our nation as well. Thank you.